

# Resisting Change

## Some Critical Remarks on Contemporary Narratives about Reform\*

Demetrios Argyriades \*\*

*“Public Service Reform (PSR)  
is a planned, deliberate  
programme of intervention  
to achieve specific objectives,  
in spite of resistance.”*

Gerald Caiden (1969) *Administrative  
Reform*, San Francisco,  
Aldine Publishers, p. 8.

### Part I Shifting models of Reform

“Public Service reform,” as a long-time observer and student of the field recently pointed out, “never goes out of style”<sup>1</sup>. In almost every country, it has been featured prominently on government agendas and the political platforms of the opposition parties competing for attention. Considering the risks, complexities, and costs of most reform agendas, their slow implementation and very mixed results, we may be justified in pondering the frequency, ubiquity and undiminished appeal of public service reform.

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\*\* Profesor de la New York University. Correo electrónico: argyriades@un.org

<sup>1</sup> Gerald Caiden & Pachampet Sundaram (2004), “The Specificity of Public Service Reform”, in *Public Administration and Development*, Vol. XXIV, p. 1.

We will leave aside, for now, the attacks against “bureaucracy”, invariably portrayed as “bloated,” “unresponsive,” “rigid,” and “ineffectual”. It is hardly symptomatic, on the other hand, that such recurrent themes have been a *leitmotif* of populist rhetoric over the past two centuries and that the stereotype of pompous, rules-addicted and paper-pushing bureaucrats remains a favoured scapegoat of journalists and politicians, but also a caricature consistently popular among novelists and pamphleteers.

The currency of such metaphors can hardly be accidental. It invites us to reflect on the role that government plays in all our daily lives, on the relevance of needs which public administration addresses or satisfies, and our resulting dependence on “officialdom”. Curiously, this dependency has not decreased substantially, nor have the “mounting costs” of government diminished as a result of the reforms which, in the past two decades, have featured such prescriptions as *downsizing*, *deregulation*, “*outsourcing*” and “*privatization*”.

However, the narratives and styles of public service reform have changed over the years considerably. Remarkably, these narratives have had much less to do with the avowed objective of bringing greater efficiency, economy and effectiveness into the public service. Far more both style and narrative have been shaped by shifting paradigms of State and public service, the scope and role of government and, in the last analysis, changing visions of society, redefinitions of citizenship and novel conceptions of Man. Indeed it would be plausible to argue, paraphrasing Paul Valéry, that all new great departures in government and public administration necessarily imply a different model of Man.<sup>2</sup>

Contrary to the assertion that “*management is management*” so often bandied about by NPM enthusiasts, the history of reform over the past two centuries suggests a different story. It shows that, what has driven agendas on reform, have been ideas drawn out of the realms of politics, philosophy, the law and, in the twentieth century, industrial engineering, psychology, sociology and economics. To illustrate this point, it may be worth our while to offer a cursory survey of dominant

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<sup>2</sup> “All Politics” wrote Paul Valéry, “implies a certain idea of Man”. See P. Valéry *History & Politics* (1962), Pantheon, New York, p. 103. On this subject, see also Edmund Leach (1974), “Models of Man” in W.A. Robson (ed) *Man and the Social Sciences*, Sage, Beverly Hills, CA.

ideologies which furnished the underpinnings for successive waves of reform. The purpose of this exercise will not be to argue their merits or to critique their flaws, but rather to place reform in a historical context and to emphasize *the role of the socio-political and economic environment* within which it unfolds. This approach will cast some doubt on the *prescriptive* value of models as guidelines for action.<sup>3</sup> It will bring into focus the uses and abuses of *public policy transfers*.

At the risk of some degree of generalization, it is possible to argue that public administration and public service reform have known four major stages during the past two centuries. Significantly, each stage has been designed to address one main dimension of the nature and role of the Modern State. The intellectual dominance of European Powers (later of North America) during this period of time explains to a large extent the *ubiquity* of this pattern in some important aspects. Significantly also, all these stages left their imprint on the form of public service systems, though their respective legacies do not coexist harmoniously in all cases. Indeed resulting frictions and contradictions may be viewed as causal factors of subsequent reforms.

## The bureaucratic State

The bureaucratic State represents the signal legacy of Enlightened Despotism and of the Age of Reason. Peter the Great in Russia, Frederick II in Prussia, Richelieu and Napoleon in France associated their names with institution-building, which laid the foundation of public service systems in their respective countries<sup>4</sup>. A very similar course took Japan and the Kingdom of Thailand on the path of reform during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> “ [...] managerialism has had a significant impact on public administration. The essence of managerialism lies in the assumption that there is something called ‘management’ [...] embodying a set of principles that can be applied (universally)”. Boston quoted by J.M. Kamensky, “Role of the Reinventing Government Movement in Federal Government Reform” in *Public Administration Review*, May/June 1996, 56(3): 251-252.

<sup>4</sup> D. Argyriades (2001), “Bureaucracy and Debureaucratization” in A. Farazmand *Handbook of Comparative and Development Public Administration*, 2nd edition, New York, Marcel Dekker, pp. 901-917; also (1996), “Neutrality and Professionalism in the Public Service” in H. Asmeron & E. Reis, *Democratization and Bureaucratic Neutrality*, London, Macmillan, pp.45-73.

<sup>5</sup> M. Sakamoto (2001), “Public Administration in Japan: Past and Present in the Higher Civil Service” in A. Farazmand, *op. cit.*, pp. 349-301; F. W. Riggs (1966) *Thailand: the Modernization of a Bureaucratic Polity* Honolulu, East-West Center Press.

What all these reforms had in common was a *vision* of the State as the principal agent of progress and modernization. It was this powerful vision which acted as a catalyst of public service reform. It helped transform a band of courtiers and retainers into a great profession. Napoleon expressed this thought in the following eloquent terms:

*I want to constitute in France a civil order. To this day, there are in the world but two powers: the military and the ecclesiastic. More than anything else, I want a corporate body, because a corporation will not die... [a corporation] has no other ambition but to be of service and no other interest but the public interest... I want a corps whose management and statutes become so national in character, that no one will ever lightly tamper with them.*<sup>6</sup>

In his theory of the State, the German philosopher Hegel echoed Napoleon's sentiments. He wrote:

*What the service of the State really requires is that men shall forego the selfish and capricious satisfaction of their subjective ends. By this very sacrifice, they acquire the right to find their satisfaction in, but only in, the dutiful discharge of their public functions.*<sup>7</sup>

Implicit in this statements is the belief that a public service should be truly a public domain and that the State – because it is the State — should be a model employer. Open competitive examinations, close links between recruitment and public education, and a career which offered rewards for industry and merit (*carrière ouverte aux talents*) were designed to give effect to these objectives.

## The democratic State

Related to this goal, was an assault on jobbery and clientelism which become major concerns with the advent of democracy, as political parties competed for electoral support. Curbing the power of executive patronage, helped introduce a

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<sup>6</sup> See D. Argyriades (1996), *op. cit.*, p. 49.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

measure of probity and transparency into the conduct of government business. It also added momentum to the re-examination of policies and practices on the recruitment and staffing of civil service establishments. Such piecemeal steps, however, did not invariably strike at the root of the problem. This was succinctly expressed in the Northcote-Trevelyan Report in the following challenging terms:

*It may safely be asserted that, as matters now stand, the Government of the Country could not be carried on without the aid of an efficient body of permanent officers, occupying a position duly subordinate to that of the Ministers, who are directly responsible to the Crown and to Parliament, yet possessing sufficient independence, character and ability and experience to be able to advise and, to some extent, influence those who are from time to time set over them.*<sup>8</sup>

A hundred and fifty years have lapsed since the issuance of this Report, yet its findings and conclusions have lost none of their former relevance. The quest for men and women of talent, integrity and competence remains an abiding concern of public service reform in most parts of the world. Now, as in earlier days, governments must compete in the market for high-level skills fully conscious of the fact that, as in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, promising men and women will go “where the prizes are to be found”<sup>9</sup>. What have drastically changed, in the intervening period, are the scope and scale of government and the degree of complexity which marks its operations. Both are ultimately traceable to new definitions of *citizenship* and concepts of the State, which democracy brought in its wake.

Democracy and elections turned “subjects” into citizens and the “nightwatchman” State into the Welfare State which cares about its citizens and broad domestic issues, not merely law and order and foreign affairs. Democracy, however, also transformed the patterns, modalities and processes of governance on almost every level. With the progress of democracy, norms like *accountability*, *responsiveness*, *transparency*, *due process*, respect for *human rights* and for *the rule of law* gradually acquired new salience, because they could be enforced. These added to

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<sup>8</sup> Report of the Committee (Northcote and Trevelyan) on the Organization of the Permanent Civil Service (January 1854) Paper 1713, B.P.P. 1854.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

the qualities and competencies required of public servants. Though, as their predecessors in the days of Absolute Monarchy, they serve the Executive Power, they must now be aware not merely of the *limits* of the authority which may be vested in them, but also of the *propriety* of the methods which they apply. Not only *what* they do, but also *how* they do it take on major importance as the core of democratic governance. This salient trait of governance tends to be overlooked.

### Democracy, the Welfare State...

In most parts of the world, shifting political platforms are widely and rightly considered as necessary features of democratic politics. The frequent change of governments and rapid succession of Ministers may well be facts of life in many countries. But they create conditions which might become intolerable without *institutional frameworks* and *personnel* ensuring the degree of *consistency, coherence, continuity* and *credibility* which the rule of law and survival impose as pivotal needs. Of course, it is no accident that securing these 4Cs under the rule of law and due process became a major plank of public service reform, especially with the advent of democratic pluralism. The dangers notwithstanding of fostering “careerism” and overly protecting the bureaucratic elites from “the winds of change”, the public service statutes which, since the nineteenth century, have served as pivotal instruments of public service reform, accorded pride of place to the objective of safeguarding neutrality, professionalism, and a certain degree of autonomy for public servants.

From the famous Pendleton Act (1883) in the USA to our own days, legislation has endeavoured to protect them against arbitrary powers, but also to design needed career structures which can *attract, retain, develop and motivate* talented men and women directing all their energies to the single-minded pursuit of the long-term public interest and the good of the citizenry at large. In many parts of the world, the emergence of trade unions within the public sector has reinforced this trend. From the early twentieth century on, professional associations and unions of public servants become important partners and often vocal players in the process of reform.

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<sup>10</sup> Lloyd Rodwin & Donald A. Sch'n (eds., 1994), *Rethinking the Development Experience*, Cambridge Mass. The Brookings Institution & The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy.

Almost throughout the world, it was the period following the Second World War which saw the most decisive expansion and reform of State and public service. During the thirty years after 1945, the range of government functions were stretched to include provision of all the basic services, notably health, education, housing and social welfare. It should not be overlooked that these were also years of decolonisation, beginning in South Asia and rapidly spreading to Africa and other parts of the world.

On a global scale, the change was *qualitative*, as well as *quantitative*. Nationally, and internationally, the promise of reform, together with the challenges that come with independence, demanded vast new programmes and institution-building on a scale almost without a precedent. These significant departures, in turn, required *professional cadres* able both to design and to manage the policies and programmes which marked the new profile of State and public servant. The post-war State emerged as primarily responsible not only for good governance and stewardship of the country as a whole, but also for the welfare of each and every citizen “from cradle to grave,” as the popular expression of the 50s and 60s suggested. True, this change was in the making for some time before the War, but triumph over Fascism, accelerated the process. Throughout the world, victory was widely perceived as a triumph over the forces of militarism, intolerance, repression and injustice. The establishment of the United Nations in June 1945 and the contents of its Charter strongly reinforced this view adding momentum to pressures for national liberation and socio-economic reforms.

Unlike its short-lived precursor, the *Covenant* of the League of Nations, the *Charter of the United Nations* gave prominence to international economic and social cooperation (Articles 55-60). This meant that peace and development required collective action and consultation among the Member States. The Marshall Plan for Europe was arguably the earliest and most ambitious experiment with this new approach in mind. At a cost which, in 2003 taking account of inflation, would amount to US\$ 100 billion, the Marshall Plan exemplified the view that tackling the complexities of rehabilitation and reconstruction in war-torn Europe was a task of enormous proportions, which could simply not be left to *laissez-faire* initiatives. The machinery of the State and the techniques of planning, which had served to win the war against the Axis Powers, were employed instead for this purpose. The success of this experiment soon turned it into a beacon and a *model* for the tasks of construction and development in the new states emerging from the process of decolonisation.

### ...and development agendas

In 1994, looking back at post-war development, a group of MIT scholars revisited this model in an attempt to explain its nature and rationale.<sup>10</sup>

*Post-World War II development economists were neither naively pro-state nor diabolically antimarket; they just saw room for public intervention. How could they think otherwise, after experiencing the depression and the war, and after being under the intellectual spell of John Maynard Keynes?<sup>11</sup>*

Whether, as has been suggested, the model did exude an overweening confidence<sup>12</sup> it caused a “Group of Experts” of the United Nations, in 1951, to set eight “*pre-conditions*” of economic development. The group included both W. Arthur Lewis and Theodore W. Schultz. Its policy prescriptions were preemptory: the government should, for example, “establish a central economic unit” and “announce its programmes for expanding employment.” Its historical theories were similarly grand: “progress occurs only where people believe that man can, by conscious effort, master nature.” It incorporated the political conditions for growth: “there cannot be rapid economic progress ... [without] the creation of a society from which economic, political, and social privileges have been eliminated.” The group in effect demanded a revolution, in moral and social life: “ancient philosophies have to be scrapped; old social institutions have to disintegrate; the bonds of caste and creed have to be done away with; and large numbers of people who cannot keep up with progress have to have their expectations of a comfortable life frustrated.”<sup>13</sup>

Central planning became *de rigueur*<sup>14</sup> and with it a centralised administrative system. The concept of reform as a planned, induced, deliberate and orchestrated change, often against resistance,<sup>15</sup> encouraged the belief that progress with reform and, therefore, with development and modernisation, depended on the effectiveness of a central agency charged with the tasks of improving the

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<sup>11</sup> Lance Taylor (1994), *op. cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>12</sup> Emma Rothschild (1994), *op. cit.*, p. 113.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>14</sup> J.K. Galbraith (1964), *Economic Development*, Boston, Mass. Houghton Mill, p. 62.

<sup>15</sup> G. Caiden (1991), *Administrative Reform Comes of Age*, New York, de Gruyter, p. 67 and *passim*.



administrative system. In an attempt to bolster its status, power and outreach, the apex and the centre of the machinery of government became the choice location for its activities and the hub for units responsible for public service reform, as well as development planning. In several countries for instance, the President's establishment of the Prime Minister's office were greatly reinforced. Their role in the design, control and coordination of overall government policy received attention and prominence.<sup>16</sup>

These centralizing tendencies were as marked as they were ubiquitous. In retrospect, however, outcomes and expectations did not invariably match and, in a number of cases, pursuit of central control produced many unintended consequences. According to a review of administrative reform in the Arab world:

*[...] the problems of performance, and deviations of practices are always dealt with, by upgrading them to higher administrative levels, claiming to achieve more control in order to prevent problems from reoccurring, instead of getting the participation of all involved executive parties to study the specific reasons of these problems and hence take the proper procedures to eradicate them.*<sup>17</sup>

Still, there is little doubt that, for the best part of the sixties and well into the seventies, the central planning mechanisms, together with the functions of outreach, coordination and control continued to attract the attention of reformers. They remained a principal focus of the United Nations Technical Cooperation Programme in Public Administration and Finance.<sup>18</sup> Thus, a U.N. report on the *Administrative Aspects of Plan Implementation* observed:

*Studies reveal that the administrative machinery responsible for plan implementation is one of the most frequent obstacles to planning. The feasibility of plans depends not only on proper co-ordination of their objectives and instruments and on technical, economic and*

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<sup>16</sup> See, for example, The Institute of Public Administration for Turkey and the Middle East (1965), *Organization and Functions of the Central Government of Turkey, Report of the Managing Board of the Central Government Organization Research Project*, Ankara, Is Matbaalick ve Ticaret, pp. 113 *et seq.*

<sup>17</sup> Nassir M. Al-Saigh (ed., 1986), *Administrative Reform in the Arab World*, Readings, Amman, Jordan Arab Organization of Administrative Sciences, p. 49.

<sup>18</sup> For details. Demetrios Argyriades (1995), "Technical Cooperation in Public Administration and Finance" in *International Journal of Technical Cooperation*, Vol. I, No. 2, pp. 223-262.

*financial factors, but also on the administrative possibilities of implementing them. Hence the need to specify clearly the institutions, procedures and executive capacity which are to be used.*<sup>19</sup>

Often, according to the report, the human resources were found wanting. Therefore, Personnel Development became a central pillar of the development effort, as well as major focus of the United Nations in public service reform. Pre- and in-service training emerged in the fifties and sixties as pivotal concerns. In a manner which broadly reflected the spirit of the times, an institution-building approach was distinctly preferred. The fifties, sixties and seventies saw the creation of centres, national schools and institutes of public administration for training and research, in large parts of the world. Often they encountered opposition from university faculties of law and political science which cast doubt on the legitimacy of these professional schools and centres of research. Examples abound on both the national and regional levels. In the developing countries, many of these schools or institutes were sponsored with the help of multilateral and bilateral technical cooperation programmes.<sup>20</sup>

It needs to be emphasized that training during this period assiduously promoted a new profile of public servant as both policy-maker and able programme manager. It exemplified the influence of prevailing development theories, especially in the way that they reshaped the contents and direction of the field for practitioners and scholars. The period in question, the sixties in particular, are the high watermark of *Comparative and Development Administration*, a field whose emergence into prominence owes much to discontent with the previous dogmatic approach but also, to be sure, to decolonization and several aid programmes, bilateral or multilateral.<sup>21</sup>

It may be safely affirmed that, in this phase, development concerns took over centre stage in the *study and the practice of public administration*. Socio-economic growth, in quantifiable terms, became the prime objective requiring state initiative particularly in areas where private enterprise and civil society at large would not

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<sup>19</sup> E/CN.12/807, December 1968, p.5.

<sup>20</sup> See United Nations (1966) *Handbook of Training in the Public Service*, Document ST/ITAO/M/28.

<sup>21</sup> For readings on this subject, see Ali Farazmand (2001), *Handbook of Comparative and Development Public Administration*, Second Edition, New York, Marcel Dekker; also W.J. Siffin (ed, 1959), *Towards the Comparative Study of Public Administration*, Bloomington Indiana, Indiana U.P.

suffice or could not meet the challenge. The implications were far-reaching. For citizens at large, socio-economic progress, later to be defined in terms of *human development*,<sup>22</sup> carried the latent promise of growing opportunities for men and women alike, a rising standard of living, and access to the benefits that civilisation had hitherto vouchsafed only to very few.

## **Part II Rise of a counter-culture: the “market model of government”**

Already in the late seventies and, even more emphatically, during the nineteen eighties, a powerful counter-culture asserted itself. It started in New Zealand, but soon moved to Australia, to the United Kingdom and the United States. The lingering global recession added to its credibility and after the sudden collapse of the USSR, which was widely perceived as the demise of socialism, it came to be portrayed as *the* key to the future and as the official doctrine of the post-Welfare State, post-cold war new world order.

What started as a strategy to tackle budget deficits and to reduce inflation developed into a full-scale offensive against “big government”, “bureaucracy” and the welfare state. The thrust of this attack, which only very recently started to lose momentum, was to reverse a process that many people argued, was leading *to government failure*. The tenets of this doctrine represented, in effect, a veritable antithesis to powerful trends which, for more than a century, had pushed in the direction of public sector growth. These tenets of the doctrine, known as New Public Management, could be summarized in the following terms:

- ◆ Decentralization;
- ◆ Devolution and deconcentration;
- ◆ Debureaucratization;
- ◆ Deregulation;
- ◆ Downsizing;
- ◆ Outsourcing and privatization of public sector activities. Privatization and “marketization” took on a variety of forms, which shared a common purpose: the “shrinking of the State” and the conversion of government, as far as that was possible, to private sector ways.

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<sup>22</sup> See Mahbub ul Haq (1995), *Reflections on Human Development*, New York, Oxford University Press.

Both in theory and in practice, the implications of this posture were drastic and far-reaching. Central planning was quietly dropped as were the centralized approaches to personnel management that had been favoured previously. Devolving responsibility meant surrendering control over decisions and inputs to the programme action officer. It meant “letting the manager manage”. To encourage a “business mindset”, competitive arrangements, like the “performance contracts,” flattened hierarchies and such organizations as the “executive agencies” were preferred over more traditional patterns. The “entrepreneurial manager” was lionized. Responsiveness to citizens was also highly prized on the principle that citizens, in fact, were the government’s clients and should be treated as such. Efficiency and effectiveness ranked high on the scale of priorities. By contrast, other values received short shift. In spite of much lip service to the contrary, professionalism, ethics, respect for the rule of law and due process lost ground. They were viewed by supporters of NPM as elements in “the traditional structures of governance that needed to be minimized as... they might interfere with the effectiveness and efficiency of the performance of Public Administration in economic terms.”<sup>23</sup> Legality and professionalism have received belated attention, but only as a reaction to the spreading pandemic of bribery and mostly from the vantage point of enhancing economy and efficiency in business and government.<sup>24</sup>

### Models as maps... or metaphors

In his critique of models, the famous US economist Paul Krugman has shown their strengths and weaknesses in shaping and promoting development agendas during the post-war decades:

*[...] there is no alternative to models. We all think in simplified models, all the time. The sophisticated thing to do is not to pretend to stop, but to be self-conscious – to be aware that your models are maps rather than reality [...]*

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<sup>23</sup> Karl P. Sommermann, “The Rule of Law and Public Administration in a Global Setting.” Report to the XXVth International Congress of Administrative Sciences, July 2001, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> For a thorough overview of the salient characteristic features, tendencies and contribution of the New Public Management, see Ignacio Pichardo Pagaza (2004), *Modernización administrativa: Propuesto para una reforma inaplazable*, Mexico, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, esp. cap. VI “La Nueva Gerencia Pública (NPM)”, pp. 165-199.

*In fact, we are all builders and purveyors of unrealistic simplifications. Some of us are self-aware; we use our models as metaphors. Others, including people who are indisputably brilliant and seemingly sophisticated, are sleepwalkers; they viciously use metaphors as models.*<sup>25</sup>

For more than twenty years, the market “model” of government has guided the discourse on public administration and public service reform. The perils of its legacy did not take long to emerge. *One size does not fit all*, yet uniform perspectives and one-dimensional thinking encouraged an approach to public service reform to which all factors other than management and economics appeared as secondary. It may, therefore, be considered as key characteristic of *externally-driven reforms*, as well as common reason for their lack of success. It has been pointed out<sup>26</sup> that the best guides for action are the prevalent tradition and practices in governance. Only on the rare occasions of total system breakdown, where readiness to accept any way out comes with complete rejection of the old *status quo*, should “made abroad, ready to wear” approaches and related radical strategies be preferred. Otherwise, home-grown solutions and feasible gradual reforms need to be the order of the day. Other than in reforms which target the introduction of new technologies, or the adoption of new tools, administrative *mimetism* seldom brings forth results.

## **The importance of context and culture**

Failure to grasp the significance of the rule of law<sup>27</sup> has been one major fallacy of this approach; lack of appreciation of the historical background, the social *context* and *culture* has been another. Often reforms proceeded as if the human factor

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<sup>25</sup> Paul Krugman “Conceptualizing Development” in *Rethinking the Development Experience* by Lloyd Rodwin & Donald A. Schön (eds, 1994), The Brookings Institution & the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, Cambridge, Mass, pp. 51-52.

<sup>26</sup> Bevir, Mark, R.A.W. Rhodes and P. Weller, (2003), “Traditions of Governance: Interpreting the Changing Role of the Public Sector,” *Public Administration*, Vol. 81, No. 1, pp.1-17.

<sup>27</sup> “To a certain extent, this can be explained by the erroneous understanding of the rule of law as legalism and not as a dynamic concept of institutional and procedural principles which [...] protect human dignity and [...] foster development of the personality of each citizen” K.P. Sommermann “The Rule of Law and Public Administration in a Global Setting” in *Governance and Public Administration in the 21st Century: New Trends and New Techniques*, p. 77.

and socio-political context could be overlooked; as if “re-engineering” was really all that mattered. In reality, however,

*[...] Interventions operate in complex social systems, with their attendant conflicts, disparate interests, loose connections, and long and multifaceted causal chains... [reducing] our capacity to predict and control behavior. This is bad news for managers who are looking for interventions that will produce specific, intended effects. It is also bad news for social scientists who believe they can develop such interventions and for those who are laboring under the delusion that the interventions they already developed work like that. And it is bad news for consultants who want to sell neat solutions and quick fixes [...]*

*An evolutionary perspective does not provide human resources practitioners with the comfort of a best way or with the illusion of certainty — [It] settles, instead, for improving adaptive processes, maintenance, and limited improvement, ever mindful of context and conflict.<sup>28</sup>*

Lack of historical depth and radical proclivities are particularly in evidence when adoption of new practices comes along with strings attached and the effects of mimetism are forced upon recalcitrant, but also resourceless “customers”. Often such imposition came in the name of science and technological progress or *globalization*, from major donor agencies.

It may be pointed out that, as experience shows, public administration and public service reform are very seldom limited to simple exercises in technological innovation. Because of their distinct ideological bent, in the eighties and nineties especially, the entire public sector and government system were targeted. The term “*public service reform*” was intentionally used to cover a broad spectrum of employees paid out of public funds. Like “civil service reform,” the term preferred in the past, it was meant to convey the impression of a systemic effort to modify and improve the institutional framework, terms and conditions of service, as well as in some cases, the vision, mission and functions of public employees.

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<sup>28</sup> Colareli, Stephen M. (2003), *No Best Way*, Westport, CT: Praeger, pp. 318, 321.

## Rhetoric and reality

Like so frequently in the past, such administrative reforms have been *externally driven*. Arguably, on that account they may have been envisioned as deliberate “forced entry” and consequently planned with the certain expectation of encountering resistance. Indeed how far “*resistance*” is an essential feature of administrative reform whether, in other words, the long-professed belief in the necessity of conflict as the *sine qua non* of the process of reform remains an open question. There is reason to believe that practitioners and scholars have been captives of narratives which over the past century dominated the discourse on administrative reform. In the words of an eminent scholar on the other side of the Atlantic:

*La réflexion sur l'administration se coule dans le moule des modèles d'administration. Ces modèles alimentent, par leur vision de la situation et du futur de l'administration, les analyses théoriques qui sont faites et les scénarios imaginés sur ses évolutions et ses transformations.” Gérard Timsit (1986)<sup>29</sup>*

## Part III The Force of Ideology

There can be no denying the force of ideology in the shaping of those narratives. Nor is there a reason to doubt the significant impact of models in determining the course and contents of the discourse on public service reform and human resources management in general. We need to be reminded, on the other hand, of who the prime contributors and shapers of these models have been, where the discourse took place, and which parts of the world served as a point of reference or source of inspiration in this regard.

As we know, the main contributors, on both sides of the Atlantic, were lawyers and philosophers, industrial engineers like Taylor and Fayol, and later social scientists. Psychologists, sociologists and social anthropologists dominated the scene in the 1930's, 40s, 50 and 60s, which also marked the heyday of the Human Relations Movement. As we have seen, this movement was later superseded by the New

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<sup>29</sup> *Théorie de l'Administration*, París, Económica, p.125

Public Management which, to all intents and purposes, represented the triumph of neo-liberal thought. As has also been shown, this powerful counter-culture made its debut in New Zealand but soon thereafter spread to Australia, to Britain and the United States. A noted American scholar, Professor Ferrel Heady described it as “representing the most recent urge to develop a science of administration, with principles of universal validity.”<sup>30</sup>

Such claims notwithstanding, however, New Public Management doctrine remains an emanation of economic thinking, a common law tradition and a management culture specific to an important, certainly, but still small group of countries. Whatever, one may think of its prescriptive doctrines, their relevance to problems and needs in developing countries has been increasingly questioned. Early successes and outreach can largely be attributed to the degree of support which they received from certain western governments and major international financial institutions.

It was against the effects of hasty and uncritical public policy transfers and the negative results of administrative *mimetism* that *comparative and developmental* administration emerged as a new field during the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>31</sup> During these two decades, the focus of attention shifted towards the context or what was termed the *ecology* of Public Administration.<sup>32</sup> Acceptance of diversity brought in its trail a stress on the indigenisation of administrative practices. It lasted twenty years and gave the development programmes of the United Nations the distinctive approach which marked an era of decolonisation and institution-building.

A movement which began during the 1980s, New Public Management (NPM) represented, in effect, a drastic reversal of course. It presaged a departure from well-established legacies, rejection of the assumptions on which they had been founded and a return to principles which typified approaches to management theory

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<sup>30</sup> Ferrel Heady, “Principles for 2001 & Beyond” in *Public Administration Review*, July/August 2001, 61(4):391

<sup>31</sup> See William J. Siffin (ed., 1959) *Toward the Comparative Study of Public Administration*, Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press; see also Ali Farazmand (2001), *Handbook of Comparative and Development Public Administration*, New York, Marcel Dekker, 2001.



and practice which had prevailed in the early 1900s. A focus on technique, the quest for perfect tools and stress on cost-effectiveness went *in tandem* with “reinvention” of scientific management, married, this time however to neo-liberal economics. Intolerance for pluralism provides the underpinnings for belief in “one best ways”. It led to propagation of the so-called “best practices”, — “one-size fits all” solutions deemed to provide the answer to problem situations in a wide range of countries.

### **The resilient myths of Convergence and Irreversible Progress**

“Convergence” was the myth which lent support to such practices and belief systems.<sup>33</sup> Reinforced by the conviction that the end of the Cold War had also spelt the end of ideological pluralism, NPM offered its model – the market model of government – as *the key* to the future. The market model of government, it was assumed, pointed the way to reform. The pioneers of change, that is to say New Zealand, Australia, UK and USA provided an example for all other countries to follow. A universe of cultures largely defined by history, geography, tradition, religion, custom and law<sup>34</sup> was neatly sub-divided in a descending order of quality and efficiency. It featured “heroes and villains, or leaders and laggards (all) in the march to the land of plenty”.<sup>35</sup>

According to this line of thought, *administrative reform* was viewed in terms of *convergence*. Divergence from the “norm” was correspondingly ignored, discounted or critiqued as an aberration, as errors of the past no doubt to be corrected with the progress of globalization.<sup>36</sup> Implicit in this doctrine is an idea of progress – *Progress with a capital P*. Hardly a new idea, it represents a feature of Western European political ideology since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, but

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<sup>32</sup> See F.W. Riggs (1961), *The Ecology of Public Administration*, London, Asia Publishing House, 1961.

<sup>33</sup> Christopher Pollitt (2001), “Convergence: the Useful Myth?” in *Public Administration*, Vol. 79, No. 4, p. 933-947.

<sup>34</sup> Geert H. Hofstede (1997), *Cultures and organizations: software of the mind*, New York, McGraw Hill.

<sup>35</sup> Rune Prefors (1998), “Reshaping the democratic State: Swedish Experience in a Comparative Perspective” in *Public Administration*, Vol 76, No. 4, p.143.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

arguably much earlier. This idea of Progress, propelled by historical forces in one direction only and quasi-irreversible has been repeatedly criticized as resting on false premises.<sup>37</sup> Remarkably however, it continues to exert a formidable influence across the political spectrum, but also to be exploited as a powerful marketing tool. Undoubtedly, it responds to fear of ambiguity as it appeals to people's strong desire for certainty and predictability.<sup>38</sup>

Overtime, as we have seen, such ideas of progress and irreversibility have divided the bulk of humanity into “heroes” and “villains”. They have the forces of “progress” against those of “backwardness”; proponents of reform against “old guard reactionaries”; “revolutionaries” against “counter-revolutionaries”. “Resisting change”, in this light, has been portrayed, invariably, as worse than ill-advised; as futile and pernicious. All militant ideologies have shared in the proclivity to bifurcate humanity in this simplistic manner. Differences notwithstanding, they have shared a common language indicative of both rejection of the past and identification of “new” with “good” or “virtue” with “reform”. Disdain for “old” and “past” has gone *in tandem* with a claim to supersession amounting to a monopoly over the future. “Unser die Zukunft” was the motto of radical ideologies during the 1930s. Was it perhaps the implosion of the USSR that inspired “The End of History and the Last Man”?<sup>39</sup> Wholesale rejection of models which hail back to the past resonates in the following passage of an Australian advocate of the New Public Management.

*[T]he traditional model of administration is obsolete and has been effectively replaced by a new model of public management. This change represents a paradigm shift from a bureaucratic model of administration to a market model of management closely related to that of the private sector. Managerial reforms means a transformation, not only of public management, but of the relationships between market and government, government and the bureaucracy, and bureaucracy and the citizenry.<sup>40</sup>*

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<sup>37</sup> See K.P. Popper (1960), *The Poverty of Historicism*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, the last chapter especially which is entitled “The Institutional History of Progress”; see also R. Nisbet (1993), *History of the Idea of Progress*, new edition Brunswick, N.J., Transaction Books.

<sup>38</sup> Remarkably, Karl Popper's abovementioned book has been dedicated to “the countless men and women of all creeds or nations or races who fell victims to the fascist and communist belief in Inexorable Laws of Historical Destiny”

<sup>39</sup> Francis Fukuyama (1993), *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York, Morrow, Williams, & Co.

<sup>40</sup> Owen E. Hughes (1998), *Public Management and Administration: An Introduction*, 2nd Edition, New York, St. Martin's Press, p. 242.

## From Welfare to Warfare

What is novel in New Public Management is not its embrace of reform or its claim to innovation; neither hopes of global outreach, despite its ethnocentricism, nor its scientific pretensions. Rather, in spite of *non sequiturs*, inconsistencies and contradictions<sup>41</sup>, its originality lies in its lack of historical depth (history is simply ignored or discarded as “obsolete”) and the sweeping radicalism of its *political* message.<sup>42</sup>

Over time the message has shifted. Its thrust and contents have changed according to the sources whence it derived support and inspiration. Viewed as an emanation of the economic doctrines of the Chicago School, it soon became identified with policies pursued by Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the USA. Especially in the latter, it has been closely tied to the political fortunes and militant ideology of the Republican right. During the past four years, or roughly since the election of George W. Bush, the surge of fundamentalism –religious and political– has given a new twist to the “reinvention movement”, which is New Public Management in an American context.<sup>43</sup> Spilling over into management, the force of fundamentalism has been felt on several levels. In very basic ways, it altered many assumptions which underpin the policies and practices of management. A potent conservative tide from the late 70s onwards has de-legitimated the positive,

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<sup>41</sup> This point was also made by Lawrence Lynn, Jr. in “The Myth of Bureaucratic Paradigm: What Traditional Public Administration Really Stood For” in *Public Administration Review*, March/April 2001 61(2), pp.144-157; and David H. Rosenbloom, “History Lesson for Reinventors” in *Public Administrative Review*, March/April 2001 61(2), pp.161-165. Characteristically, David Rosenbloom concludes: “The reinvention movement’s key literature is deeply flawed. It is wholly unclear whether the reinventors know what they are reinventing [...] Their concepts of democracy and its relationship to administration are muddled. They claim to favor democratic values. But they also disparage elections, representative institutions, and legal requirements for representation, participation, transparency and fairness in administrative decision making”.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> On religious fundamentalism, see Nicholas D. Kristoff, “Militant Christianity versus Militant Islam” in *Herald Tribune* Monday, July 19, 2004, p.8. Here, reference is made to the latest in a series of evangelical fiction depicting “The End of Days”, with “Jesus returning to the Earth to wipe out all non-Christians from the planet”. With more than 60 million copies sold worldwide, the twelve books in this series represent the fastest selling adult fiction ever. On the political front, militantism has been the mark of the “neo-conservatives”, the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) etc. On this subject see Elizabeth Drew “The Neocons in Power” in *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. 50, No. 10, June 12, 2003, pp. 1-9.

Promethean progressive view of Man, which represents the legacy of the Human Relations Movement, but goes back to the Enlightenment. The tendency thereafter has been to revert to approaches which lay stress upon discipline, dependency, hierarchy and control. A sharp swing of the pendulum appeared to reinstate ideas of Human Nature which, in the early sixties, a classical management textbook had summed up characteristically as “Theory X”.<sup>44</sup>

Some twenty years later, as the century drew to its close, the prevalent approaches and narratives veered back to negative perceptions of the human personality and of the Human Factor, now generally considered merely as a tool and as a cost of production. This view brought in its trail “downsizing” as the core of public service reform, but also drastically altered the whole configuration of public personnel policies away from the benign, development-oriented approaches of the past, towards more disciplinarian “take it or leave it” stances. The tendency to envision the workforce as a *cost* or liability, which ought to be contained, progressively prevailed over the one which looked upon it more as an *asset*, indeed as the resource on which “all else depends.”<sup>45</sup>

This change however, came with an important difference. The latest conservative tide reinstated with full force the *leaders-laggards cleavage*<sup>46</sup> which, as we have just seen, represents a standard accoutrement of Theory X approaches. Predicated on the assumption that “most people must be coerced, controlled, directed (and) threatened with punishment to get them to put forth adequate effort toward the achievement of organizational objectives”<sup>47</sup>, “mediocrity of the masses”<sup>48</sup> is viewed as going *in tandem* with the ascendancy of the few to whom, in the light of this doctrine, all virtues and all competences are vouchsafed.

Though seldom bluntly stated, such elitist doctrines, are now allowed free rein. They have been especially effective in two major areas of policy: *comparative rewards* and *management prerogatives*. Discussing the *erosion of public*

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<sup>44</sup> Douglas McGregor (1960), *The Human Side of Enterprise*, New York, McGraw-Hill Book Co. Chapter 3, “Theory X: The Traditional View of Direction and Control.”

<sup>45</sup> Lewis Likert *The Human Organization*, Mc Graw-Hill Company, New York, p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> See Rune Premfors, *op. cit.*, p.143.

<sup>47</sup> Douglas McGregor, *op.cit.*, p.34.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

*service* in their keynote address to the ASPA National Conference in Phoenix Arizona, in March 2002, Gerald and Naomi Caiden had this to say on this matter:

*Despite the measures taken in the 1990s to revamp public service career systems, many of them long overdue, they came too late to prevent the situation described by the Volcker and Winter commissions from getting worse and worse, year by year, as they had predicted. This was not just in the civil service, but in the armed forces, the police and intelligence services, not only for public sector agencies, but also for non-profit organizations, and not just in the United States, but in Canada, Western Europe and elsewhere. Meanwhile, the business sector has gone from strength, especially for top executives of multinational corporations whose compensation packages, always superior to anything in the government sector in their home countries, have taken off beyond anything foreseen a decade earlier.*

The spread of this phenomenon, the level of disparities and their tendency to grow at an accelerating pace have been recently the cause of some concern even in business circles and supporters of free enterprise. In the words of one such advocate:

*The highest profile cases of excessive pay, unfortunately, are not isolated exceptions. Bosses' pay has moved inexorably upwards, especially in America. In 1980, the average pay for CEOs of America's biggest companies was about 40 times that of the average production worker. In 1990, it was about 85 times. Now this ratio is thought to be 400. Profits of big firms fell last year and shares are still well down on their record high, but the average remuneration of the heads of American companies rose by over 6%.<sup>49</sup>*

The amount of income growth devoured by corporate profits contrasts with “the low share... accruing to the nation's workers in the form of labor compensation.”<sup>50</sup> Visibly, such disparities are self-perpetuating. They migrate into other areas of public life and arguably open the way for oligarchic influences on policy formation

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<sup>49</sup> “Where is the Stick” in *The Economist*, October 11-17, 2003, p.13. See also “Fat cats feeding” in same issue pp.73-76.

<sup>50</sup> “The Unprecedented Rising Tide of Corporate Profits and the Simultaneous Ebbing of Labor Compensation – Gainers and Losers from the National Recovery in 2002-2003”, quoted by Bob Herbert in “We're More Productive: Who Gets the Money” in *New York Times*, April 5, 2004, op-ed page.

and the evolution of society as a whole. It can be seen accordingly that, far from promoting good governance,<sup>51</sup> the market model of government advanced by NPM has lent legitimation to policies and practices which have not only furthered the erosion of public service and public trust but also undermined many of the critical values of democracy itself.

It may not be accidental that this reformist effort, in the name of NPM and the reinvention movement was: “driven primarily by practitioners and private sector consultants rather than academics or theoreticians”. Long list of “do’s and don’ts” for “creative public managers” have been marketed, accordingly, on the assumption that such principles can equally be applied to public sector agencies and private enterprises.<sup>52</sup> The principles in question were taken to be universal and axiomatic.

“*Let the managers manage*” has been the movement’s battle cry. Simple, direct and catchy, this motto exerts a strong appeal. The need for flexibility and freedom of maneuver, which it conveys, make some sense in a world where change and discontinuity have become facts of life; where rigid structures are rightly seen as things of the past and where adaptability and rapid response to contingencies are *sine qua non* conditions of survival and success. It must be pointed out, on the other hand, that criticism of rules has often served as subterfuge to brush aside or weaken important institutional and legal safeguards in areas of vital concern to vulnerable segments of the population.<sup>53</sup> It has opened the floodgates creating the conditions where the abuse of power, corruption and arbitrariness can flourish. Recent events in Iraq and the conduct of the war clearly point to such dangers.

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<sup>51</sup> For definitions of “good governance”, see *Governance: the World Bank’s Experience in World Bank Publications* (1994), Washington, D.C.

<sup>52</sup> Paul G. Thomas (2000), “Mintzberg on Public Management” in Henry Mintzberg and Jacques Bourgaull (eds.) *Managing Publicly*, Toronto, Ontario, IPAC, p.146-156; and John M. Kamensky, “Role of the Reinventing Government Movement in Federal Government Reform” in *Public Administration Review*, May/June 1996, 56(3) 251-252.

<sup>53</sup> Larry D. Terry (1998), “Administrative Leadership, Neo-managerialism and the Public Management Movement”, *Public Administration Review* 58 (3): 194; and Paul Light (1997) *The Tides of Reform: Making Government Work, 1945-1995*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press.

<sup>54</sup> See Gerald and Naomi Caiden, *The Erosion of Public Service*, *op.cit.*

<sup>55</sup> R. Oman, R. Gabriel, J. Garrett and K. Malmberg: paper prepared for the 63rd National Conference of the American Society of Public Administration (ASPA) in Phoenix, Arizona, March 2002.

Of strategies and measures ostensibly designed to foster flexibility, cost containment and rapid response none have been as controversial as outsourcing or offloading and marketization. The actual savings accruing from such debatable practices have often been in doubt.<sup>54</sup> What those measures have induced is a certain attenuation of government controls, dilution of accountability, as well as further erosion of the idea that the State, because it is the State, should be a model employer. On the pretext of non-interference, governments have allowed their private sub-contractors to get away with practices and which would have been considered as downright reprehensible in a public sector context. Studies have shown that unchecked deregulation, downsizing and outsourcing has serious repercussions on labour, economic, fiscal and monetary policies which adversely affect society, though they may yield some benefits to private interest groups.<sup>55</sup>

The unprecedented surge of massive graft and corruption, which has visited the world in recent years, bears witness to the dangers of governments neglecting, abdicating or outsourcing their overarching role in setting proper *standards* and enforcing those same standards in a consistent manner. Discounting or downplaying the normative functions of government went *in tandem* with attacks on “rules-bound administration” which the New Public Management contrasted with the merits of “entrepreneurial government.”<sup>56</sup> Over a period of years, such narratives have helped promote a mindset for which anything goes. “Ends justify the means.”<sup>57</sup>

From Enron, Arthur Andersen, World Com, Xerox and Cisco, through Halliburton to Permalat and Hollinger, massive corruption scandals have shaken *public trust* and *positive perceptions* of private sector practices. The magnitude moreover and frequency of these crises strongly suggest that the problem is systemic; one that cannot be addressed through punitive measures alone. Increasingly, the view which has been gaining ground discerns a strong connection between, on the one hand, the market model of government and, on the other hand, the rise and prevalence

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<sup>56</sup> On the subject see David Osborne & Teib Gaebler (1992), *Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector*, New York, A Plume Book, Chapters 7 & 10 esp.; see also Demetrios Argyriades (2003), “Values for Public Service: Lessons Learned from recent Trends and the Millennium Summit” in *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, Vol. 69, No. 4, pp. 521-533.

<sup>57</sup> Karl Peter Sommermann (2001), *op. cit.*

of what has been described as a “cheating culture”.<sup>58</sup> A lesson which emerges from two decades worldwide calls into question the wisdom of *privatization of the public domain* and what a noted scholar has called the “seamlessness of politics, business and administration”.<sup>59</sup> Clearly at fault is a confusion of values and disregard for boundaries best rendered by the aphorism that “management is management”.<sup>60</sup>

## Part IV Concluding Remarks

The concept that “anything goes”, that results should be prized over process represents a distinctive derivative of the market model of government. In twenty years or so, the concept has migrated from business and economics to politics and governance sweeping away the vestiges of contrary ideas encountered in its path. Its impact has been visible on the national, sub-national and international planes. Not only has it served to undermine respect for the rule of law and due process but, as already suggested it assiduously contributed to a “bottom-line mentality” which lies at the antipodes of ethics and professionalism in the public service,<sup>61</sup> as well as public life.<sup>62</sup> A reductionist perspective which rejects all values other than the self-centred pursuit of short-term financial gain and individual success, this “bottom-line mentality” feeds into a kindred doctrine which, in the name of patriotism, rejects all higher virtue, all “raison d’humanite”<sup>63</sup> and all international order.<sup>64</sup> Currently in the ascendant, this militant approach to domestic and global affairs is

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<sup>58</sup> David Callahan (2004), *Cheating Culture: Why More Americans Are Doing Wrong to Get Ahead*, New York, Harcourt Brace & Co.

<sup>59</sup> Chester Newland (2002), *The Facilitative State, Political Executive Aggrandizement, and Public Service Challenges*, Keynote Address to the ASPA National Conference, Phoenix, Arizona, March.

<sup>60</sup> See Demetrios Argyriades, “Values for Public Service ...”, *op. cit.*

<sup>61</sup> See A. Kakabade, Nada Kakabadse & A. Koozmin (2003), “Ethics, Values and Behaviours: Comparison of three case Studies Examining the Paucity of Leadership in Government” in *Public Administration*, Vol. 81, No. 3, p.479; see also Demetrios Argyriades “Values for Public Service...” *op. cit.* and Anthony Makrydemetres (2002), “Ethical Dilemmas in Public Administration” in *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 68 (2), pp. 251-266.

<sup>62</sup> See Raymond Cox III (2004), “Going to War: a Commentary on Ethical Leadership and Politics” in *Public Integrity*, Vol. 6, No. 4, Fall, pp.319-331.

<sup>63</sup> Expression borrowed from Yehezkel Droz (2001), *The Capacity to Govern*, London, Frank Cass, Ch. 9.

<sup>64</sup> Raymond Cox III, *op. cit.*, p. 321.



endeavouring to arrest and to reverse a process which, gradually and painstakingly, over the past two centuries, has moved us somewhat closer to an open society founded on freedom, equality, tolerance, compassion, solidarity and shared responsibility.<sup>65</sup> With a single-minded tenacity, it has pursued reforms to “hollow out” the State of social welfare functions, but only to reinforce its military capacity.

In this and other regards, this rising counter-culture has staked, as we have seen, its claims to originality.<sup>66</sup> Such claims are open to question. In one respect, however, the market model of government and the New Public Management may well be said to adhere to the reform tradition which prevailed in the 1950s and 1960s:<sup>67</sup> a tradition which depicts administrative reform as a Herculean labour pitting a small elite of driven *cognoscenti* against the unenlightened and long-established interest groups. It is a reform tradition which has been known to spawn “*one size fits all*” solutions, visions of “brave new worlds”, and promises of more. One size fits all solutions may be a good selling pitch. In retrospect, however, they did a lot of damage to strategic institutions in developing countries, especially those countries whose core structures of the State were mostly still in the making.<sup>68</sup> Worse still, “one size fits all” and “one best way” pretensions may have perversely encouraged *administrative mimetism* in the mistaken belief that the so-called “best practices”, which had been tried successfully in one part of the world, should be replicated in others.

The lesson we may draw from the unending saga of administration reform is that there is no alternative to “do it yourself” reform. This means creating capacity precisely for this task. Building *home-grown capacity* to plan, design, programme, direct and implement administrative reforms, as well as the capacity to monitor their progress and evaluate results must be considered central not only to the establishment and maintenance of a modern public service, but really also critical to a country’s independence. Of course this should not mean administrative chauvinism. In the “global village” where we live the study of foreign practice and the constant exchange of experience among organizations, within and across borders,

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<sup>65</sup> Values recently highlighted in the United Nations Millennium Declaration (A/RES/55/2 dated 18 September 2000)

<sup>66</sup> See Owen Hughes, *op. cit.*

<sup>67</sup> *Vid. supra*, p. 8.

<sup>68</sup> On this point see United Nations: Report of the Meeting of Experts (1997), E/1997/86 para 60 *et. seq.*

serve both a critical need and good purpose. It means, on the other hand, that national organizations must be the final arbiters of their future; that weaving the future, shaping a country's destiny and shaping its institutions forms a core function of governance.

*Lastly*, in light of all the above, we need to reconsider our *image of reform*. The language we have used has, quite perversely, induced a vision of reform in quasi-combat terms, as an ongoing battle or a crusade. A more appropriate narrative would represent reforms as incremental processes often spanning several years. It would highlight the need for inputs from many sources, support from many disciplines and several stakeholders. Reform is clearly not a task best left to "experts," though to be sure many experts coming from various fields will be required to help. It is a task requiring sound analytical skills; deep knowledge of the country, its history, its culture and institutions; good planning and sound strategies. More than anything else it calls for a clear sense of purpose and direction, but also a disposition to listen, to debate and to compromise.